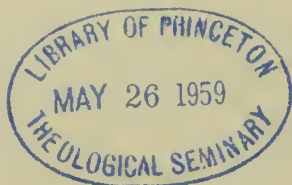


D. Merson

Deuteronomy

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DEUTERONOMY:

ITS DATE, AUTHORSHIP, AND CONTENTS.

A LECTURE

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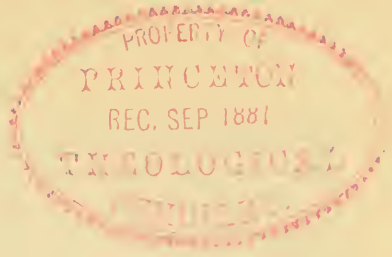
P R E F A C E.



THIS Lecture was prepared as one of a Sabbath evening course on the History of the Jewish Nation. An attempt has been made to gather up the main arguments on both sides of the great question on which it treats, expressly for the home perusal of the young men and women connected with the author's congregation. If it should happen to find its way into a wider circle, the purpose of its publication will be more than answered.

D. M.

HUNTLY, *March 30, 1881.*



DEUTERONOMY:

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THE subject before us this evening is one of pressing importance and of no ordinary difficulty. The Book of Deuteronomy has of late years become the great battlefield of Biblical critics, and in a course of lectures, such as that in which we are at present engaged, it would have been well to have avoided as much as possible questions involving discussion. Such evasion, however, would be barely straightforward in the present state of the Deuteronomic question. Several years ago one might have been justified in passing over the disputed points, and proceeding at once on the supposition that the book was both genuine and authentic, but recent utterances and the widespread interest on the subject forbid us to ignore the new situation. To do so would be to disregard the opinion of many of our ablest and most reverent investigators of divine truth, and the best policy is fairly to face the difficulties they have raised. It would be needless to shut our eyes to the fact that the generally-accepted position regarding the date and authorship of Deuteronomy has been challenged, and so, before taking the contents of the book

for granted, we must endeavour to vindicate the view we take of its historical character. It will not do, until a final settlement one way or the other has been reached, to proceed on the assumption that the old position was right, nor would it be fair to reject the results of modern inquiry simply because they conflict with the traditional view. If we are not prepared to accept the new doctrine in its present form, we should at all events give its advocates a fair hearing, and if after such a hearing we still prefer the old view, let us see that we can give an intelligent reply to those who think differently.

On the threshold of the inquiry there arises this question—What says the Book of itself? Taking Deuteronomy by itself, without comparing its contents with the books preceding or following it in the canon, what inference should we draw respecting its date and authorship? Manifestly this:—that it was delivered during the eleventh month of the fortieth year of the wanderings by Moses on the plains of Moab. The first five verses of the first chapter put this beyond debate. The book does claim to be from the pen of Moses, and the burden of proof lies with the man who denies it, and the denier may be assured that whenever he produces sufficient proof to establish his negative, the intelligence of Christendom is not so tradition-bound as to refuse to follow his lead. It is this claim to a Mosaic origin so unmistakeably put forward by the Book itself, that renders the work of the destructive critic so precarious. If he could get this claim satisfactorily disposed of, one of his main difficulties—the initial difficulty—would vanish. But here it stands, like an anvil in the smithy floor, outlasting the hammers of all the critics. To deny the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy is a far more

serious thing than to deny the same of the other books in the Pentateuch, and for the reason that in none of them is the claim made so directly as here. In Genesis, for example, it is not directly made, and the denier has at least one difficulty less. But in the case before us, it is entirely different; Deuteronomy comes distinctly claiming to be received as the last words of Moses. Is there any ground for declining to admit the claim?

Now, the moment we put this question, we find ourselves besieged with a formidable array of arguments to prove that it was the product of an age much later than that to which it pretends to belong, and therefore Moses could not have been the writer. Some refer it to the days of David and Solomon, others to the time of Hezekiah; some put it as late as the Captivity, others, less definite, maintain that it implies a long residence in Canaan. One eminent German critic¹ assigns it to the reign of Manasseh, and reduces it to something like a historical romance written by some one living in Egypt, and palmed off in Moses' name to give it weight. A favourite idea with many is that it belongs to the reign of Josiah, and was the book that Hilkiah found in the Temple, having been written either by that priest or by some one living in his time.² Such are some of the views respecting the late origin of the book in question. It will be seen that they agree in nothing but the denial of the Mosaic authorship, and so far they might be left to answer one another. Dean Milman,³ indeed, has made the remark

¹ Ewald. His theory is what is known as the *literary expedient* (or pious fraud) theory, which has received many advocates, and has of late become the popular theory.

² Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," Article "Deuteronomy".

³ "History of the Jews," Vol. I., page 178.

that if left alone they would neutralise each other by the process of what he calls "mutual slaughter". But since there is one thing in which they all agree, we must meet their united attack, and vindicate the position we take up. Now, what are the arguments by which they endeavour to set aside the early date and Mosaic authorship? We cannot in the space of one lecture give an exhaustive enumeration, but the following five may be taken as embracing the main points at issue.

- I. Some chronological and historical statements.
- II. The relation between Priests and Levites.
- III. Regulations about the choice of a king.
- IV. The Law of the central sanctuary.
- V. The style, diction, and phraseology of the Book.

I.

In the first place, it is maintained that there are in Deuteronomy *certain chronological and historical statements* inconsistent with a Mosaic origin. These statements are to be found in different places throughout the book, and are connected with such passages as the following:—"The Horims also dwelt in Seir beforetime; but the children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead; *as Israel did unto the land of his possession, which the Lord gave unto them*" (ii. 12). "Only Og King of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants; behold his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; *is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon?*" (iii. 11). "Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob unto the coast of Geshuri and Maachathi; and called them after his own name, Bashan-havoth-jair, *unto this day*" (iii. 14). "And this is the blessing, where-

with Moses *the man of God* blessed the children of Israel before his death" (xxiii. 1). "And he buried Moses in a valley in the land of Moab, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre *unto this day*" (xxxiv. 6). "And there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses" (xxxiv. 10). The words in these passages printed in *italics* are alleged to be post-Mosaic, and a similar inference is drawn respecting the entire book in which they occur. Now, when applied to the statements themselves, the inference may be just, but when extended to the entire book the conclusion is by far too sweeping for the premises.¹ The widest logical conclusion deducible is that the *words in italics* were not written by Moses, and in this every unprejudiced reader will at once concur. It has never been seriously denied that such expressions as *unto this day*, *on the other side of Jordan*, &c., point to a writer living a considerable time after Moses, and on the Canaan side of the Jordan. The last chapter referring to the death and burial of the great Law-giver has always been regarded in the light of a later addition, perhaps much later than the time of the events described.

Now, if Moses was not the writer of these passages (and we need have no hesitation in granting that he was not), the question arises by whom and when were they written? There is nothing in the words themselves to indicate who the writer was or the time when he lived. There is, how-

¹ Critics are generally agreed that there is very slender or no good MS. authority for 1 John v. 8, about the three that bear record on earth. He would be a bold reasoner who would thence infer that the rest of the epistle was not the work of St. John. And yet this is what the critics do in the case before us. They reason that, because Moses could not have written such and such passages, therefore he did not write any part of the book.

ever, evidence that a considerable period had elapsed between the time at which he wrote and the date of the events recorded. Take the reference to the bedstead of Og, King of Bashan ; when the writer says—"Is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon?" the natural inference is that he is appealing to a people who did not know Og, and had not been present at the conquest of his territory. In like manner (ii. 2) the conquest of the Israelites over the Canaanites is referred to as a thing of the past, thus showing that the whole passage was written after the settlement in Canaan. Thus there are indubitable marks of a later hand. How are we to reconcile these with the Mosaic authorship of the book *as a whole*? Such reconciliation is found in the work of a later reviser. The Book originally the work of Moses may have undergone repeated revisions, and there is nothing unnatural in the supposition that each reviser or editor thought fit to supplement the text with explanations of his own, and instead of putting them, as a modern editor would have done, in appendices or footnotes, he incorporated them in the body of the work, so that by-and-bye they passed current as the remarks of the original writer. If this theory is adopted, the post-Mosaic passages are capable of an easy explanation. In any case they are allowed to be interpolations, and if we had a complete list of them, their elimination would not in the least interrupt the flow of the narrative. Our conclusion, then, in reference to the passages in question, is, that being manifest additions by a later hand, they do not touch the question of the original authorship. They merely show that the original text has been tampered with, and therefore do not materially affect the question at issue.

II.

The second ground of objection, based on *the relation between the Priests and the Levites*, involves a difficulty of another kind, yet one which seems to admit of an easy solution. The argument is this :—That, whereas in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, there is a sharp distinction drawn between Priests and Levites, the Levites being excluded from the priestly office ; in Deuteronomy that distinction vanishes, and it is considered laudable rather than otherwise for a Levite to aspire to the priesthood. In the former books, the Levites are the servants or assistants of the Priests, set apart to the inferior service of the Tabernacle ; in the latter, they are on an equal footing, both being called “sons of Levi,” while the designation “sons of Aaron,” as the exclusive title of the Priests, is dropped. In the early years of the wanderings, the Levite Korah had to pay with his life for seeking the priesthood, at the close of the wanderings his conduct would have passed uncensured. Moreover, there is a discrepancy not only in the laws regulating their respective services, but in the means by which they were supported. Hence it is argued that laws presenting such discrepancies could not have emanated from the same author. Moses would not contradict himself. If the one is his, the other is not.

To this argument three replies might be given. In the first place, the distinction referred to in the early books has not entirely disappeared in Deuteronomy, for in the 8th verse of the 10th chapter, there is clear reference made to the separation of the tribe of Levi to other purposes than the priesthood. Then, again, in the 3rd and 6th verses of the 18th chapter, there is a clear distinction made between

the Priest and the Levite. It must, however, be owned that in several other passages, there seems to be a blending of the two spheres, as if the original distinction had been blotted out. This blending may be explained, in the second place, by the fact that the Law-giver was not enunciating the Law for the first time, but reminding his hearers of their duty, and hence there was no need for dwelling on a distinction which must have been well known. It did not concern him at the time to refer to minor distinctions. He was speaking of the general relation in which the tribe of Levi stood to the nation, and not the relation in which the different divisions of that tribe stood to one another. "Hence," in the words of another,¹ "Moses for the time very naturally disregards the difference of orders among the clergy which was not to his purpose, and ascribes priestly and Levitical functions indifferently to the tribe of Levi, to which, as the priests were, of course, Levites, these functions really belonged. The discrepancies, therefore, between Deuteronomy and the earlier books are, in this particular, superficial only. They are at once explained by the familiar consideration that he who speaks to a large and mixed audience will take care, if he knows his business, to shun irrelevant details and distinctions." It might be said, as a third reply, that it would have been surprising had no modification been made in the laws, considering the altered circumstances of the people from a wandering life in the wilderness to a settled residence in Canaan. Such a change could not fail to affect the tribe of Levi. Hence, whatever modifications crept in are satisfactorily accounted for by the altered conditions, and thus viewed the Levitical

¹ "Speaker's Commentary" on *Deuteronomy*.

laws in the early and later books are not in conflict, but in progressive adaptation to the ever-varying state of the nation.

III.

The third argument is that, because Deuteronomy contains *regulations respecting the choice of a king*, it cannot be the work of its reputed author. Those who take this view assign it to the time of the early kings, and contend that on the supposition that the regulations in question were Mosaic, the anger of the Lord against the nation for asking a king is utterly inexplicable. But they seem to forget that Moses is here speaking prophetically, and that he nowhere says that God would approve of their desire for a king. Nay, it is plain that the very wish for a king would indicate a dissatisfaction with the system of government under which they were placed. The form of government was a Theocracy, under which the will of Jehovah was the direct source of law. To demand a king, therefore, was tantamount to saying, we will not have Jehovah to reign over us. Moses foresaw that a time was coming when such a demand would be made, and framed laws to regulate the appointment. If the people would insist on having a king, let the choice be made according to the regulations here laid down.¹

But the critics regard the passage in another light, *viz.*, as an interpolation after the event, and this some of them do without adding the slightest proof. It is suprising to find the following piece of reasoning in Prof. Smith's famous

¹ Deut. xvii. 15.

article on the Bible¹:—"It is difficult to suppose that the legislative part of Deuteronomy is as old as Moses. If the law of the kingdom in Deut. xvii. was known in the time of the Judges, it is impossible to comprehend Judg. viii. 23, and above all 1 Sam. viii. 7." Let us turn up and read these passages. "And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." "And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me that I should not reign over them." Now, what is there in all this inconsistent with the Mosaic origin of Deut. xvii.? We confess we cannot see the inconsistency, and as to the incomprehensibility it may be our fault, but we are constrained to say that the critic's reasoning seems to us far more impossible to comprehend than the simple statements of Scripture. The reasoning is that if Samuel had known of God's intentions as stated in Deuteronomy, he would not have so long resisted the nation's desire for a king. But, we reply that there is no inconsistency, for Samuel might have known the Deuteronomic prophecy, and yet have resisted the nation's desire, because he knew it originated in base motives, and was fraught with future disaster to the nation; he saw that the desire for a king was a step of departure from God. For it must be remembered that it was not simply a king that was objected to, but the fact that by having a king the people would

¹ It is due to Prof. Smith here to say that his position must not be identified with those who reject the supernatural, although in some details he agrees with them. The point between him and his accusers is whether the inspiration of Deuteronomy can be held consistently with the view that the book received its *present form* (not its origin) in a later age.

imagine themselves less dependent on Jehovah. During the time of the Judges—the middle ages of Israel's history—they were greatly oppressed, and felt that if they had a king to lead them to battle, they would be better fitted to cope with their enemies. But what did this imply? It implied the virtual rejection of Jehovah as their King and Strength, and an appeal to an arm of flesh. It was this growing feeling that Samuel resisted, when he advised them not to insist on having a king. But they would not be advised, and God sent them a “king in his anger,” and thus fulfilled the Mosaic prophecy uttered centuries before.

IV.

The fourth and most formidable objection to the Mosaic origin of this book is the restriction of the nation to one central sanctuary. For the conflicting regulations on this subject compare Exod. xx. 24-26 with Deut. xii. In the former passage we read, “in *all places* where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee”; in the latter the command runs—“When ye go over Jordan, there shall be *a place* which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord”. Before the settlement in Canaan the law permitted many shrines of worship, after crossing the Jordan there was to be but one—a central one for the whole nation. Now, the argument is that this law of the central sanctuary was neither known nor observed till the time of the later kings, and therefore could not have been written by Moses.

This argument is regarded by those who hold the traditional view as by far the most difficult to meet, yet it has repeatedly been met by arguments sufficient to convince any one not biassed by a foregone conclusion. It does not concern us to controvert the allegation that the law had for centuries fallen into desuetude, what meanwhile concerns us is to show that the law was in actual existence, whether it was observed or not. Now, in the age immediately following Moses, in the time of Joshua, there is positive proof that the law of the one altar was not only known to, but observed by, the entire nation. Any later divergence cannot be explained as the result of ignorance. It might have afterwards fallen into abeyance, and been more honoured in the breach than in the observance, but that is not the point. The point is—Was the law on the statute book?¹ To show that it was, let us adduce one proof, and in such a case one is as good as a thousand.

When the conquest of the land was completed and the Tabernacle set up at Shiloh, the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh, took leave of their brethren and returned to the possessions previously assigned to them on the East of the Jordan. On their arrival home, they erected an altar; word of this reached the ears of their brethren on the West side, who appointed a deputation of princes to remonstrate with them against such conduct. The offence consisted in this—that in erecting an altar for themselves they were breaking the unity of the national worship. The one altar at Shiloh was to suffice for the

¹ The fallacy of the so-called “higher criticism” lies in taking it for granted that because a law was not observed at the time, it did not exist. Many of the Mosaic laws were not meant to be enforced till a later age, but they were on record all the same, ready for service when the time came.

whole nation. The two and a half tribes were well aware of this, and from the explanation they gave, it is evident that they did not mean it as a shrine for worship. They meant merely to commemorate God's goodness to them by erecting the altar of "Ed". And when reminded of the Mosaic law relating to altars, they promptly disavowed the intention attributed to them of making it to supersede the central shrine, which was wherever the Tabernacle happened to be at the time, first at Shiloh, then at Nob, and finally on Mount Zion.

This incident, related in the 22nd chapter of Joshua, is sufficient to show that the nation knew and observed the Deuteronomic regulation relating to a central place of worship. But the critic steps in and asks for an explanation of the fact that this regulation was so soon disregarded, and that altars were erected at such places as Hebron, Gilgal, Bethlehem, Shechem, Bethel, &c., and sacrifices offered at them by men of all the tribes, such as, Gideon, Manoah, Elijah, Saul, &c. It must be owned that there is a difficulty here, and many explanations not quite satisfactory have been proposed. There is no use attempting (as some have done) to deny the plurality of sanctuaries, and perhaps the best explanation yet offered is by Principal Douglas of Glasgow—that "this sacrificing at a number of the old patriarchal shrines was an irregular expedient to which Samuel and the other pious men were driven by the necessities of the times, in order to prevent the total cessation of public worship". The degeneration may have taken place in some such way as this. While there was only one altar for sacrifice and offerings, flesh might be eaten anywhere, if the central shrine was at too great a distance (Deut. xii. 21). Now this permission to

eat flesh anywhere may in course of time have given rise to a similar liberty with the sacrifices and offerings. And, moreover, no one acquainted with the history of Israelitish idolatry will be at a loss to understand how the law in question was so soon ignored and practically set aside. From beginning to end that history shows a constant tendency to forget God.

But to make good our position we are not called upon to explain how the above declension took place. It is enough that we show that the law thus disregarded was in existence at the time, and it is almost certain, from the case adduced, that the law of the one altar, no matter how it came to be ignored, was on the statute book written by Moses.

V.

The fifth and last objection relates to the *style, diction and phrasology of the Book*. This objection, unlike the previous ones, is not based on particular passages, but on the literary merits of the book as a whole. The sentiments are expressed in diction so different from anything in the previous books as to suggest at once a different author, and a later age. Such is the argument, and doubtless there is much to be said in its favour; but when we take into consideration the solemn circumstances in which the words were uttered and the purpose of them, we are not surprised to find a difference in style and phraseology. The law-giver was not so much enunciating laws, as exhorting his people to obey laws already given. Nor can we forget that he was addressing them for the last time, speaking with the tenderness of a dying father to his sons, which would impart solemnity and earnestness to all he

said. The style differs from that of the earlier books, just as the hortatory part of an address differs from the parts that are explanatory and didactic, or as the style of an "old man eloquent" with its easy flow differs from that of a young man to whom words do not readily come at a bidding.

This explanation, however, is not satisfactory to the critics, who maintain that a different age and a different author alone will account for the diversity of style and literary finish. The nearest approach to it is Jeremiah, whose diction in its impressive roll resembles that of Deuteronomy. Hence some conclude that Jeremiah was the writer. Now, while granting that there is a marked resemblance in the two styles, we cannot grant the inference drawn. Similarity in style does not necessarily imply identity of authorship. "The agreement between the style, diction, and phraseology of Jeremiah and Deuteronomy arises merely from *imitation*. The book of Deuteronomy had been rescued from its long neglect by Hilkiah, when Jeremiah was a comparatively young man. It doubtless made a great impression upon him, as it did upon others, and nothing was more natural than that he should seek to form his style in every way upon such an excellent model."¹ There is nothing unnatural in this supposition; indeed it is in the highest degree probable; the acceptance of it involves much fewer difficulties than the rejection of the Mosaic origin. And, where there are difficulties either way, it is wise to adopt the view that is attended with the fewest.

We have thus examined the five main arguments against

¹ "Moses and Deuteronomy," by Moderator.

the Mosaic origin of this book, and if we have not entirely removed every ground of objection, we have given sufficient reasons for our own position. But this is not enough, we must seek to take the ground from our opponents' feet. So in addition to the negative arguments already adduced, the following three positive proofs, briefly stated, ought to carry immense weight. First, when the tribes crossed the Jordan they were instructed to take their stand, one half on Mount Gerizim and the other half on Mount Ebal, to hear the blessings and the cursings read out of the Deuteronomic law as recorded in the 27th chapter. The 8th chapter of Joshua contains an account of their compliance with these instructions. Joshua did as instructed, and "there was not a word of all that Moses commanded which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel". Moreover, he is said to have read *out of a book*, and inasmuch as the blessings and cursings are contained in but one book, it must have been Deuteronomy. Secondly, reference has already been made to the book found in the temple in the time of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv). There is substantial unanimity among scholars of all shades of opinion that this book contained the Deuteronomic or second law. The theory is that it had been lost for centuries, and now discovered by some workmen while the temple was undergoing repairs. Some of the "higher critics" take a different view, and contend that it was an entirely new book. But it is plain from what Hilkipah said to Shaphan that he regarded it as an old book brought to light—"I have found *the book of the law* in the house of the Lord". Does not the loss of it throw some light on the neglect into which the law of the one sanctuary had fallen? It is plain too that the discovery of this book

took the king by surprise, and he felt how grievously his forefathers had transgressed its laws, for he said—"Great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the Word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book". It is also said (2 Chron. xxxiv. 14) that the book was *given by Moses*, which Hebrew scholars take to mean *in the handwriting of Moses*. If this is so, it is a second positive proof. But, further, our Saviour himself quotes Deuteronomy as the work of Moses. Three times did he rebuke the tempter by quoting from it. The Apostles speak of it in the same way, so that if we are wrong, we err in good company. Thus there is positive evidence of the Mosaic origin of this book in different periods of history, first in the age immediately succeeding the death of its professed author, then in the time of the kings, and lastly in the early years of Christianity by our Lord and his Apostles. Is there need for more?

Laying aside argument, let us spend the remainder of this lecture in analysing the contents of the book. As the word *Deuteronomy* implies, it is a second law, or rather a recapitulation of an old law with such modifications and additions as were necessary to adapt it to present circumstances. Excluding the last chapter, which is allowed to be an appendix by a later hand, the contents fall into five divisions. The first four chapters contain a rehearsal of the story of the wanderings, along with an exhortation to obedience founded on God's past goodness. The people are reminded of the exclusion of the former generation from Canaan on account of their conduct in connection with the mission of the spies, and the appropriate lesson drawn from it. The punishment inflicted on them in the matter of Baal-peor

is also made the ground of solemn warning against idolatry in the future. This address is followed by the appointment of three cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan.

The second, and by far the largest division, extends from the fifth chapter to the end of the twenty-sixth. It begins with a repetition of the ten commandments in almost the same language as at Sinai; and contains some modifications of, and some additions to, laws already given. Moses speaks not merely as the law-giver, but as a father affectionately warning his sons. He charges them as God's covenanted people to abjure idolatry, and have no fellowship with heathen nations. All monuments of Canaanitish idolatry in the land must be destroyed, and a central sanctuary for Jehovah's worship erected. They are also reminded of their duty in regard to the chief feasts, the seventh year, and year of Jubilee; the maintenance of the Levitical priesthood, and diverse laws and ordinances relating to sacrifices, vows, leprosy, &c. All these they were solemnly charged to observe as God's peculiar people; and as the reward of obedience, He would make them high above all nations that he had made "in praise and in name and in honour".

In the third section, embracing chapters xxvii. to xxx. inclusive, the subject is "the blessing and the curse," and they are dwelt on with thrilling earnestness. Knowing well the apostacy into which the nation would fall in later days, the speaker dwells with significant emphasis on the curses, and in his prophetic utterances in the 28th chapter, it is plain he had in his eye the awful disasters that would befall them, when they would be vanquished by a people coming from afar, of fierce countenance and a strange tongue, become a proverb and a by-word, and be scattered

among all nations of the earth. Against committing the sin that would fit them for this terrible doom, he entreats with the tenderness of love, and persuades them by the terrors of the Lord, concluding his exhortation with the burning appeal—"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

In the fourth division, comprising chapters xxxi. and xxxii., beginning—"I am an hundred and twenty years old this day," he delivers a parting address to his successor, Joshua, exhorting him to be strong in the Lord and of good courage, and to the elders of Israel to be faithful to their trust and read the book of the law to the people from time to time. Then, swanlike, sitting on the bed of death, he sings his noble song, which, for sublimity and pathos, for true poetic excellence and depth of spiritual meaning, is probably unsurpassed in the whole range of inspired poetry, beginning—"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth," and ending with the triumphant outburst—"Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people."

The fifth and last division is the thirty-third chapter, containing the blessings of the tribes. The general blessings already uttered were common to the entire nation, but here special blessings are pronounced on each tribe singly—"Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few." "And this is the blessing of Judah—Let his hands be sufficient for him, and be thou an help to him from his enemies." "And of Levi he said, Let thy Urim and thy Thummim be

with thy holy one whom thou didst prove at Massah." "Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety." "And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land." "Rejoice Zebulun in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents." "Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad." "Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan." "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord, possess thou the west and south." "And of Asher he said—Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." Then follows a glowing description of the excellency of Israel in having the God of Jeshurun as their help and shield. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." "Happy art thou, O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! And thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places."

Thus ended the great Law-giver's address to his nation on the plains of Moab, and with his words ended his work. Nothing now remained for him but to die, and so, in obedience to divine premonition, he leaves the goodly tents of Jacob which had been his joy so long, and ascends the rugged sides of Abarim till he stands on the top of "Nebo's lonely mountain"—alone on a lonely mountain top.¹ In his greatness he had all his life in a manner lived apart. Such a life found a fitting close in the loneliness of the dying. With his natural force unabated, he met the last summons; and, with undimmed eye directed across the Jordan, he viewed the promised land from Gilead unto Dan. His

¹ "How strange a life," says one, "begun upon the perilous wave, and ended on the mountain top!"

noble spirit bowed to the divine decree that forbade him to cross, the call came bidding him, "Come up hither," and Moses entered into rest. "God's hand touched him, and he slept." His last moments are told without a word of varnish. "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord."

And had he not high honour ?
 The hill-side for his pall,
 To lie in state, while angels wait,
 With stars for tapers tall ;
 And the dark rock-pines, like tossing plumes,
 Over his bier to wave ;
 And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
 To lay him in the grave.

God buried him, but "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day". The spirit is with Him who gave it ; let the body sleep in its mysterious repose till waked on the resurrection morning by the voice of the Archangel, and summoned by the trump of God to enter upon a fairer land than that from which it is now debarred.

Allow me, in closing, to draw a few inferences from the whole subject. Comparing the contents of the book as now briefly reviewed with the arguments against its Mosaic origin, I think I am justified in saying that the "higher critics" have failed to make good their case. It will not do, however, to dogmatise on the impossibility of their yet doing so, but assuredly we may say that *as yet* their attempt has not succeeded. Their main work is *objection* and *destruction*, and there is nothing easier than destructive criticism. They pull down without erecting a consistent substitute, for in regard to this book at least they are agreed in nothing but that Moses was not its author, but

when and by whom it was written are questions to which as many replies are given as there are critics. Now, while it would not be reasonable to cling to the Mosaic authorship, simply because it has been held by the Church in the past, it is certainly reasonable, before giving it up, to see that we have a consistent theory to put in its place. If I felt it to be wholly untenable, I confess I would be at a loss which of the many current adverse views to adopt. But suppose I did adopt one—any one, what then? Why, I feel it would be fleeing from one difficulty and embracing a greater, for whatever difficulties there are in holding the usual view, there are vastly more in denying it. If we had a theory that involved no difficulties, the matter would end. Nay more, let a theory be mentioned involving fewer difficulties than the generally accepted one properly understood, and no unprejudiced person would hesitate to adopt it, for the view that is encumbered with the fewest difficulties is presumably the correct one. In any case, while the question stands unsettled, we must be careful lest we land in greater difficulties than those from which we wish to escape.

But, you will ask, if the contest is to be regarded as a drawn one, what are we to do in the meantime? To which I reply—Be in no hurry to give up your present position till you know of a better. Wait for more light, and welcome it from all quarters, more especially if it comes from men of acknowledged ability, and loyal to the truth as it is in Jesus. And if ever a decision is arrived at in which there will be a substantial harmony, there need be no fear that it will clash with revealed truth. "The word of the Lord is tried," and criticism cannot harm it. Let no one imagine that it is to subvert revealed

truth that eminent Christian critics have spoken as they have done—very far from it. But in their desire to seek what they consider a truer historical basis for the truth, they have undoubtedly laid their statements open to suspicion in regard to the consequences to which they lead. Yet it is scarcely fair to judge of an opinion by its supposed consequences. Let it be judged on its intrinsic merits, and not by the inferences we may choose to draw from it. The attributing of inferential opinions has greatly retarded the settlement of this question, and but for this the relation between the two parties might be of a much more friendly kind, and the gulf of separation considerably narrowed. More reverence on the one side and a little less dogmatism on the other would contribute vastly to a harmonious solution.

We must not assume that the critics are wrong in everything. Scientific investigation has in the past brought to light many defects in our interpretation of Scripture, and we should profit by the lesson thus taught. Few branches of research have shown of late years more advance than the department of Biblical criticism, and we owe this in no small degree to progress in the Sciences, more especially Geology and Astronomy. Few if any now-a-days would stake their reputation on the Confession-of-Faith view of the six days in the Mosaic account of Creation, and yet the time was when that view was deemed vital. It may be that "the long results of time" may have in store for us many a revelation respecting God's word that meanwhile we little dream of, but such light will not dim the truth, it will make it shine with a purer and more heavenly lustre. At all events, whatever be the final settlement, we need not fear for the truth. It will defend itself, and

everything is perishable save the truth. So-called Schools of Theological thought pass away with the generation that gave them birth, but the fountain of truth remains the same. Forms die, but truth lives; and whatever is one-sided or erroneous in our mode of viewing it must ere long recede into the past, but that which came from God will live on from age to age.

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

“The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”

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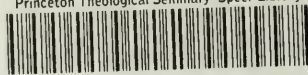
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